

Matt. 18:22-35. Forgiveness is not quantitative.

D. It is not a matter of arithmetic, but rather of love.

Love has no limits.

E. As often as a person repents, we are to extend forgiveness.

FORGIVENESS

V. [Who Should Take the Initiative?]

A. We need to address another question in this study is:

Who should take the initiative in solving problems?

B. NOTICE Matt. 5:23-24 & Matt. 18:15-17

Both the offender and the offended are under obligation.

If both have the right attitude, they will meet each other half-way.

Conclusion

A. We should manifest a forgiving spirit, not only toward those who repent of their wrongs, but towards all men.

B. Yet, someone might ask, "How can we be expected to forgive one who has not yet repented? Isn't that asking too much?"

C. Apparently it is not!

D. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34).

E. This does not imply that God actually forgave them at that point because divine forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance.

F. However, it shows that Jesus refused to hold a grudge against His accusers. He did not go to the grave harboring resentment.

G. Neither should we.

H. Some might object by saying, "When Jesus expressed these words, He demonstrated a forgiving spirit that is beyond the reach of ordinary humans."

I. However, as if to emphasize that we are capable of manifesting the same attitude, the Bible also records the words Stephen spoke when he was martyred. Acts 7:60.

J. These great examples should impress us when we are insulted, and mistreated. Instead of reacting with hatred and hostility, we should follow the path of love and forgiveness.

The Father provides forgiveness, through the Son, But man MUST respond + repent + obey.

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FORGIVENESS

(most from Mark Mayberry)

INTRO

In a remote garbage dump in the Smokey Mountains, a large black bear often rummages through the trash looking for food. He guards the dump site as his own personal domain and quickly chases away all intruders. Yet, there is one small animal that the bear allows into the dump: a skunk. Although the grizzly could easily win a fight with his smelly, two-toned rival, he doesn't even try.

Why? Because he knows the high cost of getting even!

Smart grizzly! Much smarter, in fact, than many humans who spend weary days and sleepless nights brooding over the offenses and wrongs that they have suffered. Such individuals often spend a great deal of time thinking of ways to "get even." Yet, those who follow such a course always end up hurting themselves more than their enemies.

I. Our Lord Jesus said, "Love your enemies."

- A. Scoffers have ridiculed this advice as being impractical, idealistic, and even absurd.
- B. However, when the Great Physician said, "Forgive," He was prescribing good medicine for both the body and soul.
 - 1. Harbored resentment and pent-up hostility can lead to both physical and spiritual disorders.
 - 2. Physically, it causes stress, ulcers, and even heart attacks.
 - 3. Spiritually, it can give rise to hatred, wrath, malice, etc.
- C. And according to Gal. 5:19-21, those who allow such dispositions to overpower their hearts will suffer eternal damnation.
- D. Like the bear, We should realize the high cost of getting even!

II. [What is Forgiveness?]

- A. Forgiveness is not simply refusing to return evil for evil.
- B. It does not express itself by saying, "I'll forgive you, but I'm not going to have anything to do with you in the future."
- C. It doesn't say, "I'll forgive, but I won't forget."
- D. So what exactly does it mean to forgive?

- 1. The Dictionary defines the word "forgive" as:

cf. Tape recorder in answering machine. It returns to start, new tape, but message is still there, until another call.

- a. to grant pardon for or remission of an offense or debt
- b. to cease to feel resentment against someone

- E. But, to truly understand what forgiveness is all about, we must look to God. Acts 3:19 If we repent and turn again to God, He has promised to "blot out our transgressions."
- F. Have you ever wondered where this expression "blot out" came from? In ancient times, notes and memos were written on wax tablets. After they had served their purpose, the tablets were smoothed down and reused.
- G. This perfectly illustrates the nature of divine forgiveness. When God forgives, He forgets. He strikes the transgression from the record.
- H. When a person genuinely repents, God receives him back wholeheartedly and acts as if the offense never happened. Isn't that a wonderful expression of grace!

III. [Why is Forgiveness So Important?]

- A. The call to forgive is not casual advice that can be ignored. Rather, it is a divine command that must be obeyed!
- B. The Scriptures teach that heaven's forgiveness is conditional: God will not forgive us of our sins unless we are willing to forgive others of theirs Mark 11:25-26 & Col. 3:12-13.
- C. The principle of love also demands that we forgive I Pet. 4:8. A loving person does not keep a running ledger of the mistakes of others. CALLED "stamp collecting."
- D. When someone asks our forgiveness, we must put the transgression out of our minds. From that point forward, we should act as if the offense never happened.

IV. [How Often Must We Forgive?]

- A. NOTICE Matt. 18:21. The Jewish rabbis taught that a person was obligated to forgive his neighbor three times.
- B. Peter doubled this and added one, thinking that this would be entirely sufficient.
- C. However, Jesus' answer reveals that Peter had the wrong attitude